



Testimony in Support of H.B. 6659

Appropriations Committee, February 23, 2023

Submitted by Kelly Robbins, Parent Ambassador, Woodstock

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Kelly Robbins. I am a parent ambassador for the Northeast Early Childhood Council. We are a regional council covering the rural towns of Brooklyn, Canterbury, Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam, Sterling, and Thompson.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 6659. Our children are counting on you to add \$1 million to the Office of Early Childhood budget to continue funding Connecticut's local early childhood collaboratives.

These collaboratives provide essential infrastructure, parent ambassadors, and core staffing to provide vital resources and services at the local level for our children. We ask that this be increased to \$2 million in F.Y. 25 to allow us to expand by creating 24 new collaboratives, especially regional ones in rural parts of the state so that every town benefits from local coordination.

The NECC helps promote early childhood development with many of our programs including Early Learning Kits and Social Emotional Learning kits. We would love to expand these projects in the future to reach as many children in our region as possible. We value connecting with parents and sharing resources - more funding is imperative to be able to facilitate the opportunities for these connections + community building.

As mentioned, our area is very rural, and our residents are empowered when we band together, combine resources, and act as a region. If we had the funds, the NECC would be glad to expand to serve more local towns, such as my home, Woodstock. With two staff members and four parent ambassadors, it takes a lot of work and time to support 7 towns and ensure that every child in each town is a healthy, safe and successful learner. Often, it takes a bit more time and planning to reach disconnected families - we need to have enough funding for staff/PAs that we are able to adequately do so.

Thank you for your leadership,
Kelly Robbins